

**Final Pronouncement
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International Education Standards™

International Education Standard 6, Initial Professional Development – Formal Assessment of Professional Competence (Revised)

IES™





About IFAC

IFAC, by connecting and uniting its members, makes the accountancy profession truly global.

IFAC member organizations are champions of integrity and professional quality, and proudly carry their membership as a badge of international recognition.

IFAC and its members work together to shape the future of the profession through learning, innovation, a collective voice, and commitment to the public interest.

About the International Education Standards

The International Education Standards (IESs), issued by IFAC, provide a globally recognized baseline for professional accountancy education. IFAC member organizations—champions of professional quality and integrity—use the IESs to develop strong, ethical, and competent accountants who serve the public interest. By working together, IFAC and its members shape the future of the profession through learning, innovation, and a collective commitment to excellence.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARD 6, INITIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – FORMAL ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (2026)

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Introduction

Scope of this Standard (Ref: Para. A1–A2)

1. International Education Standard (IES) 6 prescribes the requirements for formal assessment of professional competence that aspiring professional accountants are required to demonstrate by the end of Initial Professional Development (IPD).
2. IES 6 is addressed to International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) member organizations. IFAC member organizations have a responsibility to assess whether aspiring professional accountants have achieved the required level of professional competence by the end of IPD. In addition, IES 6 may be helpful to educational organizations, employers, regulators, government authorities, and any other stakeholders who support the learning and development of aspiring professional accountants.
3. Within the IESs, formal assessment is the evaluation of professional competence. This involves assessing learning outcomes to have confidence that an aspiring professional accountant has demonstrated the required level of professional competence by the end of IPD to perform a role as a professional accountant.
4. IES 6 specifies requirements for the formal assessment of professional competence, while:
 - IES 2, *Initial Professional Development – Technical Competence* (2026), IES 3, *Initial Professional Development – Professional Skills* (2026), and IES 4, *Initial Professional Development – Professional Values, Ethics, and Attitudes* (2026), specify the learning outcomes to be assessed relevant to their areas of focus within IPD; and
 - IES 5, *Initial Professional Development – Practical Experience* (2015), specifies requirements for the assessment of practical experience.
5. Definitions and explanations of the key terms used in the IES and the *Framework for Professional Accountants and Aspiring Professional Accountants* (2015) are set out in the *Glossary of Terms for International Education Standards* (2026).

Effective Date

6. IES 6 is effective from July 1, 2026.

Objective (Ref: Para. A3)

7. The objective of IES 6 is to establish appropriate assessment activities to determine whether aspiring professional accountants have demonstrated the required level of professional competence by the end of IPD to perform a role as a professional accountant.

Requirements

Formal Assessment of Professional Competence (Ref: Para. A4–A7)

8. IFAC member organizations shall formally assess whether aspiring professional accountants have achieved the required level of professional competence by the end of IPD, drawing on the outcomes of a range of assessment activities that are undertaken during IPD.

Principles of Formal Assessment (Ref: Para. A8–A23)

9. IFAC member organizations shall be responsible for ensuring that the design, delivery, and oversight of assessment activities and processes to formally assess professional competence within professional accounting education programs have high levels of:

- Authenticity
- Equity
- Integrity
- Reliability
- Sufficiency
- Transparency
- Validity

The principles of formal assessment are listed in alphabetical order. Each principle is of equal importance for assessment activities.

Verifiable Evidence (Ref: Para. A24–A25)

10. IFAC member organizations shall base the formal assessment of professional competence of aspiring professional accountants on verifiable evidence.

Explanatory Material

Scope of this Standard (Ref: Para. 1–5)

- A1. Within these IESs, professional competence is the ability to perform a role to a required standard. Professional competence goes beyond knowledge of principles, standards, concepts, facts, and procedures; it is the integration and application, including practical experience (as defined in IES 5), of (a) technical competence, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes as defined in IES 2, IES 3 and IES 4, respectively.
- A2. Although the formal assessment of professional competence during IPD is the responsibility of IFAC member organizations, other stakeholders, such as employers, regulators, licensing bodies, universities, colleges, and private education providers, may provide substantive input into the design, delivery, and oversight of assessment activities.

Objective (Ref: Para. 7)

- A3. Establishing whether aspiring professional accountants have demonstrated the required level of professional competence by the end of IPD serves several purposes. It protects the public interest,

enhances the quality of the work of professional accountants, and promotes the credibility of the accountancy profession.

Formal Assessment of Professional Competence (Ref: Para. 8)

A4. To formally assess whether the required level of professional competence has been achieved, the IFAC member organization may draw on the outcomes of one or more assessment activities that take place during IPD. The configuration of the formal assessment activities during IPD may vary. Some examples may include:

- (a) A single multi-disciplinary assessment delivered by the end of IPD;
- (b) A series of assessment activities that focus on specific areas of professional competence, delivered throughout IPD; or
- (c) A series of assessment activities, including workplace assessments, delivered throughout IPD.

IFAC member organizations determine the appropriate configuration of formal assessment activities for their professional accounting education programs.

A5. Assessment activities are those activities designed to assess specific areas of professional competence. IPD assessment activities can be delivered in different formats. Some examples of formats may include:

- (a) Written or computer-based examinations;
- (b) Presentations;
- (c) Case studies;
- (d) Simulations;
- (e) Workplace assessment by employers; and
- (f) Portfolio of evidence on completion of workplace activities.

IFAC member organizations determine the appropriate format of formal assessment activities for their professional accounting education programs.

A6. The types of assessment activities selected and how they are delivered may depend on factors specific to each IFAC member organization. Some factors that may impact this could be:

- (a) The remoteness and spread of geographical locations where aspiring professional accountants are based;
- (b) Specific events local to the jurisdiction, for example, national emergencies;
- (c) Available educational and other resources of the IFAC member organization;
- (d) The number and backgrounds of aspiring professional accountants being assessed;
- (e) The availability of learning and development opportunities provided by employers; and
- (f) Regulatory requirements in the jurisdictions of IFAC member organizations.

IFAC member organizations determine overall how these types of factors may impact the format and delivery of formal assessment activities for their professional accounting education programs.

A7. Factors relevant to determining the required level of professional competence to be achieved by the end of IPD may vary. Some examples of factors that may impact this could be:

- (a) The complexity and variety of tasks undertaken by professional accountants;
- (b) The expectations of stakeholders (such as the public, employers, and regulators) relating to the nature and extent of professional competence;
- (c) Specialized knowledge required by professional accountants working in particular industries;
- (d) The level of professional judgment required to undertake an assignment or complete a task;
- (e) The varied roles of professional accountants, such as the preparer of financial statements, tax advisor, or management accountant; and
- (f) The complexity of the working environment.

IFAC member organizations determine how these types of factors may impact the required professional competence to be achieved at the end of IPD.

Principles of Formal Assessment (Ref: Para. 9)

A8. Professional accounting education programs are designed and delivered to support aspiring professional accountants to develop the required professional competence by the end of IPD. They may consist of formal education delivered through degrees and courses offered by universities, other higher education providers, IFAC member organizations, and employers, as well as workplace training. The design, delivery and oversight of the professional accounting education programs during IPD may therefore involve substantive input from stakeholders other than IFAC member organizations.

A9. The principles of formal assessment - authenticity, equity, integrity, reliability, sufficiency, transparency, and validity - apply to individual formal assessment activities that are delivered during IPD. They apply irrespective of the delivery format.

A10. An assessment activity has a high level of authenticity if it assesses the intended learning outcomes in a way that reflects realistic situations that may be faced by professional accountants. Authenticity is not an absolute measure, and different assessment activities may have different levels of authenticity. Authentic assessments prepare aspiring professional accountants for the complexity of tasks, variety of tasks and how these tasks are undertaken.

A11. There are many ways that assessment activities can be designed to increase authenticity. For example, the authenticity of an assessment may be increased by:

- (a) Including tasks and activities resembling those required of a professional accountant;
- (b) Incorporating the use of technologies such as software packages, data analytics and visualization tools; and
- (c) Using real-life case studies.

A12. An assessment activity has a high level of equity if it is fair and without bias, allowing all aspiring professional accountants an equal opportunity to successfully complete the professional accounting education program. Equity is achieved by assessment activities which are accessible and inclusive to all aspiring professional accountants. Equity is not an absolute measure, and different assessment activities may differ in their level of equity. Equity may be improved when those who design, deliver and oversee assessment activities are aware of the possibility of

misinterpretation, bias and barriers to access. Equity increases stakeholder confidence in the fairness and credibility of assessment activities.

A13. There are many ways to design assessment activities to increase equity. For example, equity may be increased by:

- (a) Providing access to technology where it is relied upon for assessment activities.
- (b) Reviewing assessment activities to ensure that they are respectful to linguistically and culturally diverse experiences and backgrounds.
- (c) Providing clear assessment requirements and policies.
- (d) Making appropriate adjustments to accommodate additional educational and/or assessment needs, such as providing additional time, resources, or alternative assessment formats.

A14. An assessment activity has a high level of integrity if it is designed, delivered, and overseen to minimize the potential breaches of assessment security, improper administration and/or completion of an assessment. Integrity is not an absolute measure, and different assessment activities may have different levels of integrity. All parties involved in assessment activities have a role to play in increasing the integrity thereof. Assessments with a high level of integrity increase the confidence of stakeholders that the assessment completed and submitted reflects the aspiring professional accountant's own professional competence and has been prepared in accordance with the rules and principles of formal assessment governing the assessment.

A15. There are many ways that assessment activities can be designed, delivered, and overseen to increase integrity. For example, the integrity of assessment activities may be increased by:

- (a) Scheduling of synchronized examinations to avoid content sharing;
- (b) Securing examination content so that it remains confidential;
- (c) Providing a range of variable, comparable test materials where the assessment type allows;
- (d) Using supervised assessments, including technology-assisted monitoring;
- (e) Using appropriate technology to check originality of assessment questions and answers;
- (f) Establishing clear policy statements related to assessment integrity, including whether artificial intelligence may be used by aspiring professional accountants;
- (g) Educating aspiring professional accountants about policies and penalties for integrity breaches; and
- (h) Establishing clear policies on breaches of assessment security, including an appropriate framework of sanctions.

A16. An assessment activity has a high level of reliability if it consistently produces the same conclusion, given the same set of circumstances. Reliability is not an absolute measure, and different assessment activities may have different levels of reliability. An assessment activity has high reliability if the majority of assessors, acting independently, consistently come to the same judgment, given the same set of circumstances. Reliability increases the confidence of stakeholders that the outcome of assessment activity accurately reflects the professional competence of the aspiring professional accountant.

A17. There are many ways that assessment activities can be designed and delivered to increase reliability. For example, the reliability of an assessment may be increased by:

- (a) Selecting appropriate assessors and providing assessors with an assessment rubric or marking guide and training;
 - (b) Avoiding the use of ambiguous wording in assessment requirements;
 - (c) Undertaking a quality review of the assessment content before finalization;
 - (d) Using psychometric modelling; and
 - (e) Checking the stability and adequacy of the technology and the user interface.
- A18. An assessment activity has a high level of sufficiency if it evaluates the required professional competence with an appropriate balance of depth and breadth, knowledge, and application, and integration across a range of situations and contexts. A high level of sufficiency is also relevant when considering the entirety of the assessment activities that are undertaken during IPD. Sufficiency is not an absolute measure, and different assessment activities may differ in their levels of sufficiency. Sufficiency increases stakeholder confidence over the completeness of the demonstration of competences by the aspiring professional accountant.
- A19. There are many ways to design assessment activities to increase sufficiency. For example, sufficiency may be increased by including:
- (a) Assessment activities that assess the required learning outcomes for technical competence, professional skills, and professional values, ethics, and attitudes (breadth) at the required level of detail (depth); and
 - (b) Workplace assessment activities that require aspiring professional accountants to demonstrate professional competence across a wide range of professional skills, and professional values, ethics, and attitudes that are applied to many different situations.
- A20. An assessment activity has a high level of transparency when details of an assessment activity, such as the competence areas and learning outcomes to be assessed and timing of the activity, are disclosed publicly. A high level of transparency is also relevant when considering the entirety of the assessment activities that are undertaken during IPD. Transparency is not an absolute measure, and different assessment activities may differ in their levels of transparency. Transparency increases stakeholder confidence over the assessment activities and processes.
- A21. There are many ways to increase the transparency of assessment activities. For example, transparency may be increased by providing details on:
- (a) The areas of professional competence to be assessed;
 - (b) Assessment activity formats, including rubric and evaluation criteria;
 - (c) The timing of those assessment activities;
 - (d) How assessments are developed;
 - (e) Examiner reports and previously used exam questions; and
 - (f) The assessment policies.
- A22. An assessment activity has a high level of validity if it assesses the intended learning outcomes. Validity is not an absolute measure, and different assessment activities may have different levels of validity. Validity enhances the credibility of the assessment activity. Validity has multiple forms and includes the following:

- (a) Face validity—An assessment activity has high face validity if the assessment activity is perceived to measure what it is intended to measure;
- (b) Predictive validity—An assessment activity has high predictive validity if the content of the assessment activity relates to the particular aspect of professional competence that it is intended to assess; and
- (c) Content validity—An assessment activity has high content validity if the assessment activity provides adequate coverage of the particular aspect of professional competence being assessed.

A23. There are many ways to design assessment activities to increase validity. Examples that may increase the forms of validity include:

- (a) Face validity may be increased when assessing the learning outcomes to apply a particular accounting standard, if an assessment includes a comprehensive and relevant case study rather than a simple case study based on incomplete information;
- (b) Predictive validity may be increased when assessing learning outcomes for leadership, by relying on a workplace assessment of how well an aspiring professional accountant leads a team rather than relying on the outcomes of a written assessment; and
- (c) Content validity may be increased when an assessment activity covers more, rather than a few, aspects of the particular area of professional competence being assessed.

Verifiable Evidence (Ref: Para. 10)

A24. Verifiable evidence is evidence that is objective, and capable of being proven and retained. Basing the formal assessment of learning outcomes on verifiable evidence may satisfy the needs of third parties who oversee or regulate an IFAC member organization. Verifiable evidence increases the confidence of stakeholders that aspiring professional accountants have demonstrated the required level of professional competence by the end of IPD.

A25. Examples of verifiable evidence may include:

- (a) Validated certificates of successful course completion or course transcripts;
- (b) Recorded outcomes of successful achievement in assessments; and
- (c) A record of achievement provided by employers on competence achieved by aspiring professional accountants.

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